

the Maduro regime in Venezuela can survive is because of Cuba and some other help, by the way, from the Russians and others. There is a problem, which is that the country is a basket case right now economically. Therefore, people are leaving. They are surging out of the country as fast as they can. There are 1.7 million Venezuelan refugees in the country of Colombia. Think about that. Colombia, to its credit, has said: We are going to take care of these people. It has given them temporary protected status. It has given them places to live and shelter, and Colombia is taking them in as refugees. I also saw this in Ecuador, where they have hundreds of thousands of Venezuelan refugees.

This is impacting not just Venezuela, but is impacting our allies in the region, who are required—again, I commend them for this—to be able to help in this crisis. It is one reason we need to be sure that we deal with these issues in Cuba and in Venezuela to try to give people the ability to live in a free and open society, with a democracy, because then they will tend to stay home and develop their economies, compared to what we are seeing in the streets of the cities of Cuba today and seeing the misery that we see in Venezuela. We talked about that a lot as you can imagine.

Finally, we talked a lot about the illegal narcotics issue because the narcotics trade is devastating these countries, not just because people are using in those countries, which they are, by the way, in increasing numbers, but more because of the transit going through these countries and the corruption that results from the huge amount of money that is involved in the drug trade.

In a place like Colombia, unfortunately, the cocaine production is up. During COVID, they increased the production of cocaine, not decreased it, as you might think. And where is this cocaine going? I pushed and pushed on the data here with the U.S. Embassy and with our Colombian counterparts. Roughly, 90 percent of this cocaine, they believe, is coming to the United States of America.

Are we helping these countries? Certainly not by our drug policies. I mentioned the immigration policies earlier that are not helping these countries. How about the drug policies? If we can't do a better job of reducing demand in America, it is hard to see how these countries in Latin America can, all of which are affected.

The transit through Ecuador is their big issue and the corruption that results. In Mexico, of course, the drug cartels control parts of the Mexican countryside right now. There is terrible violence in Mexico because of the cartels, because of the drug trade.

I was impressed with every President I met with, including President Lopez Obrador, who is doing his best in a very difficult situation. What would be helpful to him is to have, in his case, less

of a crystal meth, heroin, and fentanyl demand in the United States, because that is coming into his country and then going up north. It is creating huge problems in his country, including, again, a higher usage in each of these countries as well. They are impacted also by the deadly nature of these drugs. Fentanyl, as you know, is killing more people by overdose deaths than any other drug right now.

Our overdose deaths in the United States of America are increasing to the point that, over the last 12 months and from every data point we have, it looks like we had the worst year in the history of our country in terms of overdose deaths.

Before the pandemic, we were making progress. We were actually reducing use, reducing overdoses, reducing overdose deaths. What we did here was make a difference with the, roughly, \$5 billion of additional spending this Chamber approved in the Comprehensive Addiction and Recovery Act and also in other legislation to help the States be able to provide better prevention, better treatment options, and more long-term recovery.

We were actually making progress, and then the pandemic hit. We have to get back to it, folks. We have to redouble our efforts, and we have the legislation to do that. Senator WHITEHOUSE and I have legislation called the Comprehensive Addiction and Recovery Act 3.0, the third version of it.

We need to be smarter on telehealth options. We need to be smarter on encouraging what works in terms of prevention because that is good for us as a country but also, again, because of the devastation that it is causing in every country that I was in—in every one of them. They want us to do a better job here so that they won't have to suffer the consequences there.

When I talked to President Duque in Colombia, whose commitment to fighting the narco-traffickers is absolutely critical—and we appreciate him so much for what he is doing—he had to tell me: The real issue is the demand in your country. It is harder for me to solve the problem here.

He is absolutely right. So we can, and I think we will, as a Congress, begin to refocus on this issue. I hope, post-COVID and get back to a situation where we are seeing progress in reducing use and reducing overdoses and overdose deaths and, in fact, helping these countries be able to get back on their feet.

Finally, in terms of trade, not aid and commerce, it is a great opportunity for us right now. Certainly, China thinks so. It is investing in these countries, and we should be too. We should be looking at these countries not just as neighbors but as true allies who have been with us on democracy-building, on human rights; who have been with us on international issues and as neighbors who really care about the relationship between our countries.

My hope is that our trip, as small as it was with just six Senators and just a

few days in the region, was helpful to ensure those ties are deepened, to establish new ties, and to, perhaps, with some of the followup we are going to do, encourage more investment, more trade, and more commerce with these countries. But also, I hope that it was an eye-opener for all of us that we have got our role to do here. We need an immigration policy that makes sense, not just for us, but for these countries as well. We need to have a policy with regard to drugs where we are doing a better job at reducing the demand side of the equation, not that we shouldn't stop on the eradication of crops and the interdiction of drugs.

It all helps to reduce the issue, because the price of the drug will go up if there is less supply, and that is important for fentanyl which is so inexpensive and so deadly and so powerful. But the most important thing by far is to allow people to get into treatment—understanding this is a disease—to allow people to have longer-term recovery options and to come up with more effective ways to prevent the use of the drug in the first place and to ensure that we are working together with our Latin neighbors and with our communities here in this country to do just that.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. MURPHY). The Senator from Utah.

REMEMBERING DEAN COX

Mr. ROMNEY. Mr. President, I rise today to honor and celebrate the outstanding legacy of my dear friend Dean Cox. His enduring commitment to public service over the course of his life and his consequential career are worthy of the highest praise.

Many Utahns knew Dean as an accomplished Washington County commissioner, but those closest to him knew him as a loving friend, a neighbor, dad, grandfather, and husband, who devoted his life to helping others.

With Dean's passing, Washington County has lost one of its finest public servants. Dean's legacy reminds us that the most reliable path to success in public and private life is marked by an unwavering dedication to principle and compassion.

With people from across our State, we extend our deepest sympathy to his family and his loved ones. He is a man we will miss very, very much.

Dean's lifetime of public service in Washington County and across southern Utah cements his reputation as an indispensable expert on a wide range of vital services for first responders, businesses, and State and local governments.

A true son of southern Utah, Dean was raised on the family pasture by his veteran father and caring mother in St. George. Throughout his youth, Dean learned how to fix just about anything in his father's garage and mechanic's shop, mastering his trade craft in Bob's Garage.

The course of his life would, however, change while attending Brigham Young

University. There, he would meet the love of his life, LaRene Leavitt, and the two would soon dedicate their lives to raising their four children at their home in St. George.

Dean and his brother decided to purchase Bob's Garage and carry on the family tradition. Their shop—renamed Colorland Sales and Service—was not only a successful small business, but it allowed Dean the opportunity to pass along the skills he had learned from his dad to his own children as well.

Dean's career in public service began as a volunteer emergency responder in Washington County. As a stellar radio operator and licensed pilot since the age of 19, Dean's emergency coordination efforts through major disaster responses and other trials earned him experience and admiration from the communities he protected.

Impressed by his years of excellent service, Washington County offered Dean the critical role of county administrator, where he executed the policies set forth by the county commission. Then when a seat on the commission became available, Dean was encouraged to join the race. His candidacy was backed by three decades of local knowledge, by his expertise and broad popularity within the community.

Victorious, Dean then became the decisionmaker. Without a doubt, the hallmark of Commissioner Cox's legacy is his successful breakthrough in securing approval for the Northern Corridor project. His pragmatism and willingness to reach compromise was the key to resolving long-held disagreements between disparate parties. His efforts yielded a win for the transportation needs of the Nation's fastest growing State and a win for the wildlife conservation of its most beautiful.

Last year, 80 percent of his constituents reelected Dean Cox to be their Commissioner—80 percent. Despite this incredible achievement, illness would tragically force Dean to receive hospital care, including chemotherapy. To his character, Dean continued to serve while undergoing this treatment.

He passed away surrounded by loved ones, and he is survived by his loving family: his wife, LaRene; his son Jeffery, and Tanna, Matthew, Keira, and Camille; his daughter Elisa, and Quinten, Ethan, Anna, and Audrey; his daughter Kristen, and Thomas, Kate, Jonas, and Hailey; his son Edward, and Karen, Emery, and Everett.

At every step of Dean's remarkable career, his sweetheart LaRene stood by his side. Her love and support sustained him through decades of selfless public service, and now, LaRene carries on his wonderful legacy. Our great State owes Dean and LaRene Cox a debt of gratitude for their friendship and kindness to all and their indelible contributions to southern Utah's destiny.

Our hearts go out to them. We love them dearly and pray for happiness and joy in their ultimate reunion.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Wyoming.

BORDER SECURITY

Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, I come to the floor today to talk about the crisis at our southern border. We have the humanitarian crisis there. We have a healthcare crisis there. And we also have a national security crisis there.

Over the last 2 weeks, as I traveled the State of Wyoming, I heard from people all across the State about the condition of the southern border, and not surprisingly, the people of Wyoming recognize that there is actually a crisis at the southern border, and there is chaos at our border.

People across the State of Wyoming are shocked—shocked—at the way the Biden administration has been acting deliberately to weaken our national security and security at our border. We need to strengthen our southern border. Leaving the border open is like leaving the door to your home open; maybe some good friends will come through the door, but sooner or later, the wrong people will enter your home.

An open border is an open invitation, and it is an invitation to the whole world. Now, this includes drug dealers, sex traffickers, and it includes gang members, and it even includes terrorists. When President Biden took office, he flipped on the green light, and he rolled out the welcome mat. He sent a message to the world. The message was received: The border is open.

Since President Biden took office, 600,000 illegal immigrants have been arrested crossing the border. This is more than the entire population of my home State of Wyoming. Border arrests have gone up every month since President Biden has been in the White House.

Last month, a deputy Commissioner of the Border Patrol retired after 27 years in that office. His name is Robert Perez. Since leaving office, he has had a few things to say. He said: "What [Border Patrol is] seeing since February . . . is absolutely unprecedented." He said, "It's a crisis unlike anything I've ever seen. . . ."

Right now, we are on the pace to 2 million illegal immigrants. That is what we are looking at, 2 million illegal immigrants crossing the southern border into the United States this year alone. That is the most in two decades, and those are just the illegal immigrants that we know about. In addition, tens of thousands of additional illegal immigrants are coming across the border and are not being stopped.

At the same time, we are seizing more fentanyl at our border than ever before. The numbers are astonishing. This drug is so powerful that a fatal dose is the equivalent to just a pinch of salt. In the last 6 months, Border Patrol has seized enough fentanyl to kill every man, woman, and child in America. Some experts will say that the amount they have captured, in terms of the synthetic drug fentanyl, is a small fraction of the amount that is actually getting across the border every day. This would mean a quarter-

million pounds of fentanyl is likely to flow into the United States this year alone, and it is not just staying at our southern border. It is in every State of the Union.

Look, this just didn't happen. Six months ago, the border was nearly secure. Then Joe Biden was sworn into office, and he undid the successful policies of the previous administration. He stopped building the wall even though it has already been paid for.

Under the previous administration, asylum seekers had to remain in Mexico until their day in court. President Biden stopped that. He ended that policy, basically saying to everyone: Come in.

It does seem that anything the previous administration did that was done successfully, President Biden has chosen to do the opposite. This isn't policymaking; this is knee-jerk partisanship.

President Biden has had 6 months to fix the crisis that we are living with today. He is only making it worse, and he is doubling down on the mistakes he has already made. It wasn't enough to end the Remain in Mexico policy, which was successful and which Border Patrol agents tell me needs to be put back in place if the goal is actually to secure the border.

Now, the Biden administration seems to be actively looking for people who had to wait in Mexico under President Trump and let them into the United States. He is inviting them into our country, and he is not stopping there. He is going further.

Now, it seems like President Biden is going to open the door even wider. Last year, at the start of the pandemic, the previous administration closed our borders to people from coronavirus-impacted areas. This was a decision made by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. They did this under title 42 of our laws. This is a section of our laws related to public health.

Well, it is likely to have saved thousands of American lives and protected our public health. It has also helped our Border Patrol. They will tell you that. They will tell you that this has helped them to stem the flow of illegal immigration over the past year.

But now, President Biden, I understand, wants to end that policy—at least that is what the White House is telling the press. That means the crisis at the border is going to get even worse.

You don't have to take my word for it, listen to what Democratic Congressman from San Antonio, Congressman HENRY CUELLAR, had to say. He represents a district in Texas right on the border—lives there, goes home every weekend, talks to the people, and knows the situation on the border. He recently said ending the title 42 order is "going to provide another incentive." He said, "The drug cartels are going to start saying you can come in." That is Congressman CUELLAR, of Texas, and I believe he is right.